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GERMAN FASCISM AND THE WORKERS

by LEO (Berlin)

The Fascist dictatorship is here. Based on the so-called Harzburg block, on an alliance with the monarchistic Nationalists, the National-Socialists have taken power. How did this come about, especially in view of the constantly repeated "prophecies" about the "disintegration" of Fascism, confirmed, apparently, by the steady decline in Nazi votes thru several elections? To the capitalist papers, especially to the liberal journals, it seems a perfect mystery; the official Communist Party press refers to the "unbroken successes" of the Communist Party of Germany; the Social-democrats explain it away by saying that Hitler is not "really" in power after all—he is, in fact, a "prisoner" of the more "reasonable" Nationalists!

* * *

FASCISM IN POWER

But a fact is a fact! The struggle between the Junker-monarchist clique and the Fascists for hegemony in the camp of reaction, has been decided in favor of Fascism. The Fascist party has received the leading positions in the state apparatus: Hitler is Reichs-Chancellor, Frick is Minister of the Interior, Goering is Prussian Minister with control over the police, and the Reichswehr Minister is a Nazi sympathizer. The top-most heads of the official state apparatus, beginning with Hindenburg, are submitting to the Nazi claims to leadership; the state apparatus is under the command

of the Fascist party with the approval of the big capitalists and the big agrarians, both. This is the Fascist dictatorship in cold fact.

The great mistake that the liberal, the Social-democratic and even the official Communist spokesmen have made and are still making is in assuming that the parliamentary struggle exhausts the class struggle, that the elections are the first and last word in politics. As a matter of fact, never were the real motive forces in social and political life more outside of parliament, never was the parliamentary drama more of an empty puppet show, than today in Germany. With this in mind, what has happened in Germany becomes perfectly intelligible.

The Schleicher government was the last attempt of the exploiting class of Germany to resist the Nazis claim to domination. The Schleicher government, like the Papen Cabinet before it, was a government of a small clique of top bureaucrats, generals, big landowners and big capitalists. In an even shorter period of time than its predecessor, it reached a hopeless blind-alley. It was unable to make even an attempt to solve the grave economic problems of German capitalism. It was unable to reconcile the sharp antagonisms between the Junkers and the industrial capitalists. It was unable to meet the growing mood of resistance of the working class. It was unable, above all, to provide an effective mass base for the continued rule of the German bourgeoisie. Even the Junker-monarchist group split and its decisive elements swung to Fascism. All this only stimulated the inauguration of the Nazi dictatorship.

The Harzburg front was revamped. At the cradle of the new government of Hitler and Papen stood the heavy industrialist exploiters of the Ruhr region. The big landlords collaborated. In order to guarantee continuation of their social and economic rule, of capitalist exploitation in all its forms, the decisive sections of the big bourgeoisie had to appeal for salvation to the National-Socialist movement, with its broad mass base.

THE PROGRAM OF THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

The program of the Fascist dictatorship involves the

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complete destruction of all the achievements of the German working class won thru decades of struggle at a tremendous sacrifice. The Fascist dictatorship aims to destroy all labor organizations, whether reformist or revolutionary. It aims to slash wages to the bone. It aims to wipe out the trade unions and with them the collective agreements, thereby surrendering the masses of workers to the tender mercies of the exploiters. It aims to introduce compulsory labor service, thereby reducing the toilers to actual slavery. It aims to supply the big industrialists and landlords with still more generous subsidies at the expense of the people. It aims to rearm German imperialism and to satisfy its newly whetted appetite. It aims to drown every sign of spiritual freedom under a wave of cultural reaction. In other words, the program of the Fascist dictatorship is to supply German capitalism with a way out of its present deadly crisis by making possible the degradation of the standards of the German working people below even those of the early days of capitalism. This capitalist way out of the crisis, championed by the Fascist dictatorship, is to be paid for by the workers with the loss of all political rights, with the reduction of the masses to disfranchised slaves. It would be an unspeakable shame if the German proletariat, with its glorious past and its militant traditions and its powerful organizations, were to meet this fate without the most determined struggle.

* * *

LABOR MUST TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE!

The workers should not be deceived by the fact that the Hitler government is revealing its program not all at once but gradually, in one field after another. Things are happening fast enough to show what's ahead. The Communist and Social-democratic organizations are already illegal. The trade unions are already half destroyed. Forced labor has already been promulgated by Hitler. The Fascist terror is already sweeping Germany, leaving a bloody trail behind. The Nazi party is already being systematically incorporated in the state apparatus and being transformed into its instrument.

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The obvious meaning of Hitler's demonstrative declaration of war against the working class, in the domestic and foreign fields, a threat to tear the labor movement up by its very roots and a hardly disguised bid to the imperialist powers to join in a crusade against the Soviet Union.

The German proletariat must take up the challenge thrown down by the Fascists. There must be no hesitation, no vacillation, or else it will be too late! The labor organizations are not yet destroyed; they still possess fighting power!

The fate of the working class now depends upon whether it can unite all of its organizations, of all political viewpoints, for common resistance to Fascism and for a common counter-offensive against it.

The triumph of Fascism was made possible by the condition of the German labor movement. Strongly entrenched in labor unions and other organizations, the working class of Germany was rendered impotent thru lack of unity. The division of the working class, the demoralizing surrender policies of the Social-democrats and the isolating sectarianism of the official Communist Party, paralyzed the fighting force of the workers, destroyed their confidence in their own powers and made it impossible for them to inspire and win over the vacillating sections of the petty bourgeoisie. It was under such conditions that the Nazis rose to power.

* * *

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNISM IN THE CRISIS

The whole political conduct of the German Social-democratic Party for the last few years served as the stepping-stone in the triumphal ascent of Fascism. The mechanism thru which the workers were disarmed and the way opened to Fascism was the policy of the "lesser evil." The proletarian revolution was suppressed in the name of "pure democracy". Democracy was sacrificed in the name of the Constitution and the Constitution was surrendered in the name of "law

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and order." Under the sign of the "lesser evil" the Social-democrats "tolerated" the Bruening emergency-decree regime and thereby supported the offensive of capital on all fronts. To "save the country from Hitler", the Social-democrats called upon the workers to elect Hindenburg and thus made possible the triumph of Hitler. Self-deception and the deception of the masses, the constant acceptance of the "lesser evil" to the point of swallowing every greater evils—such has been the main line of policy of the Social-democratic leaders.

The policy of the official Communist Party has led to the same result from the other direction. Deluded by its parliamentary victories and completely ignoring its pitiful weakness in the trade unions and shop committees, it boasted that Fascism was "being smashed", was "disintegrating", could never come to power in Germany. At the same time, it added to the confusion and chaos by calling every government, from Bruening to Schleicher, a "Fascist dictatorship". How can you fight against the *danger* of a Fascist triumph, if Fascism is already here and has been here for years and is, furthermore, "collapsing"? Having surrendered the initiative to the Nazis in the anti-Young Plan referendum of 1929, the C. P. leaders rushed to make up for lost time by dangerous concessions to nationalistic hysteria (the notorious "programmatic declaration of national and social emancipation"). And all the while, the official Communist leaders resisted every suggestion and appeal of the German Communist Opposition for the forging of a united anti-Fascist front composed of the labor organizations of the various political tendencies. The narrow, sectarian course of the official C. P. only facilitated the surrender policy of the Social-democrats and paved the way for Hitler's triumph.

The condition of the labor movement which made possible the victory of the Nazis was dramatically revealed on January 30 when Hitler took power. Dismay and consternation spread among the working class. Spontaneous struggles burst out in various parts of Germany and heroic resistance met the murderous onslaughts of the Nazi Storm-Troops and police. But of organized, centralized, nationwide resistance there

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was not a sign. The S.P. leaders counselled "caution" and urged the workers to "wait" until Hitler should "violate the Constitution" and then—to appeal to the Supreme Court! But of course, the Constitution had been turned into a scrap of paper, with the help of the Social-democrats, as far back as the Brüning regime. To tell the workers to rely upon the Constitution and the Supreme Court against Hitler is to tell them to await passively their own enslavement and the ruthless suppression of all their organizations, the thoroughgoing destruction of all economic, social and political rights.

The Social-democratic leaders try to hide their own surrender to Fascism by speculations on the "antagonisms" between Hitler, on the one hand, and Hugenberg-Papen-Hindenburg, on the other. Some even have the criminal audacity to maintain that Hitler is not "really" in power, that he is a "hostage" of the "more moderate" Nationalists, who will "tame" him and "prevent him from going to excesses!" The blood of the hundreds of German workers, slaughtered in the last few weeks by the murder-bands of Hitler, cries out against this shameless cynicism!

Trust in the "loyalty to the Constitution" of the Supreme Court and in the "moderation" of Hindenburg! Before March 5 the Social-democratic leaders tried to assuage the unrest and the mounting militancy of the workers by urging reliance upon the elections. But was it not already clear then that these elections would be only a framed-up "referendum" for the Fascist dictatorship? If reliance upon the power of elections has always been dangerously stupid, it was positively a crime on March 5!

* * *

NO CAPITULATION!

The official Communist Party, too, continues its very harmful policies. It still refuses to recognize the real character of Fascism or to appreciate its real menace. Cries the "Rote Fahne":

"We will expose and attack the National-Socialists (as) allies of the wage-cutters, Papen

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and Hugenberg. . . . We will take the ground on which to expose the Nazis and the capitulating Social-democratic leaders and to defend the interests of the toilers: the ground of the struggle of the workers for more wages, of the struggle of the jobless for more relief. . . ."

At the present time to raise no other slogans than higher wages and more relief means to capitulate to Fascism, means to refuse to take up the struggle against Fascism! Not so long the Finnish Communist Party fell under the blows of the Fascists without a struggle. This must not happen in Germany!

The official Communist Party is still dominated by the most sterile sectarianism. Under pressure it has made a gesture for a united front. But it has no effort at all to bring the campaign for unity into the unions, the mass organizations and the shops, not only because of its slim connections with the labor organizations but also because of its unwillingness to give up its sectarian tactics, completely and without reservation. The united front still remains merely a phrase.

A totally false estimation of class forces in Germany underlies the impotent tactics of the official Communist Party. Every regime which violates the "constitutional guarantees" and uses violence becomes Fascist but, on the other hand, even after the Nazis are in power, even when the Social-democratic Party is completely outlawed, even when the Social-democratic unions are being destroyed, and Social-democratic workers shot down on the streets, Social-democracy, according to the official Communist leaders, is still "the main bulwark of the ruling German bourgeoisie." Social-democracy and not Fascism! On the basis of such an analysis, is a united labor anti-Fascist front, a united front of Communist and Social-democratic organizations against Fascism, possible?

It was the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) which raised the question of the menace of Fascism before the German proletariat as far back as 1929, when the official Communist spokesmen ridiculed any such notion and branded any attempt to formulate

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and popularize an anti-Fascist program of action as the veriest opportunism. With vigor and clarity, it laid bare the class nature and tendencies of development of Fascism and outlined the tasks of the working class and of the Communist Party in the crisis. With unrelenting determination, it championed the tactics of Leninism and mobilized all its resources to carry these tactics out into life, to rebuild Communist influence in the unions and in the shops, to build up a united anti-Fascist front of the working class. On the very eve of Hitler's ascension to power, it sharply criticized the official C. P.'s irresponsible phrase-mongering about the "collapse" of Fascism and warned of what was ahead, strongly emphasizing that it was not yet too late to act. In the first days after the Nazi triumph, it appealed even more loudly for real united action and took the initiative in many parts of the country to mobilize and lead resistance to the Hitler murder bands. Today in Germany, the Communist Opposition represents the only tendency in the labor movement that has a clear and realistic perspective and an effective program of action.

The Nazis could only come to power because the German workers listening to the leaders of the C. P. G. and the S. P. G., did not take the menace of Fascism seriously and did not prepare against it. The S. P. and C. P. leaders kept on talking of the "approaching collapse" of Fascism until Hitler took power. Today there is no more time for illusions; today the German workers must face the facts. The Nazis have triumphed; Hitler is in power. With express speed he is putting thru the Fascist program, a program of the enslavement of the masses and the destruction of all genuine workers organizations. The German working class must not allow itself to be smashed—the plans of the Fascist dictatorship must not succeed! It is not too late yet, but it may soon be. *The anti-Fascist unity of labor!* must be the great slogan of the hour.

March, 1933.